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ABSTRACT

Adult educators face a challenge if they are to aid in the improvement of the status of women in the Third World. Women in developing countries, especially those in rural and poverty areas, are often restricted to second class educational and work opportunities. Adult educators could contribute to the reduction of such discrimination in the following ways: (1) particular attention should be given to the improvement of educational opportunities for women in rural areas and in areas of extreme poverty; (2) successful women educators must be placed in key administrative and teaching positions so as to raise the aspirations of women students; (3) women must be included in national development planning and in the implementation of adult education programs; (4) the objectives of adult education programs must be directed toward cultural change especially in respect to the status of women in society; (5 curricula, textbooks, and materials of instruction used in the adult education programs must be free of sex bias; (6) adult education programs must be offered at times and at places where those programs are readily available to women; (7) instructional media, easily adaptable to rural and poverty areas, can enhance the adult education programs; and (8) action research with a widely based participatory rationale concerning adult education methods, procedures, and programs should be initiated. Even with such improvements in adult education, however, changes in the status of women in developing countries will occur slowly, not as quickly as educators may envision. (Author/KC)

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IMPROVING THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE THIRD WORLD:

A CHALLENGE TO ADULT EDUCATORS*

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*An adaptation of this paper will appear in a forthcoming book, Adult Education in Developing Countries, by Harry G. Miller and Elmer J. Clark.

Rationale of the Paper

Extensive research has been conducted concerning the status of women in developing countries and the need to improve the educational opportunities for those women. The dimensions of that research can be gained in part by reviewing the bibliographies prepared by Kelly and Lulat (14) and by Rihani (21). Kelly and Lulat acknowedged that the education of women in the Third World has become a major concern of researchers since 1970. They listed some 700 general sources, but admitted that research on the factors affecting school enrollments of women and on the process of education for women is extremely limited. However, Kelly and Lulat concluded that the impact of the expansion of women's education has been studied extensively by researchers (14: S224-27).

Rihani's bibliography was a major project of the New Transcentury Foundation's Secretariat for Women in Development. The objective of her research was to gather and make available papers on women and development, with particular attention to research having either an action or a programming orientation. The 287 entries of Rihani's bibliography covered ten broad topical sections, which were subdivided geographically (21).

As Elliott and Kelly introduced a special issue of the Comparative Education Review on the general theme, "Women and Education in the Third World," they identified the essential concern about the education of women in the Third World. Elliott and Kelly concluded that, "What is needed is to study how private and public spheres interact and how education mediates this interaction." (5: S3)

Elliott and Kelly established directions which also could serve as the theme of the present paper. They identified three questions which are most critical for future scholarship concerning the education of women in developing countries, as follows:

1. What happens within schools to generate the outcomes which scholars have documented? . . .
2. What are the many impacts of schooling on adult life? . . .

3. How are the educational attainment rates of women affected by the overall resource allocation and collective decision-making in a society? (5: S11)

Before suggesting a program of adult education for women of the Third World, it would seem necessary to study the present status of education for such women. The research presented in this paper attempts to be representative of the major findings pertaining to such issues as the educational attainment rates of women, the applicability of education for the vocational needs of women, and the effects of education on the social status and economic standing of women. Research on these and related topics should form the basis for decisions concerning the establishment and revision of adult education programs for women in the Third World.

Educational Status of Women in Developing Nations

A broad generalization concerning the status of women in developing countries is that such women encounter the same social, economic, and educational inequities, when compared to men, as do the women of the other countries of the world. The inequities seem to be more pronounced, however, when the total economic level of the nation reaches closer toward poverty. While there have been indications of improvement in the status of women in certain countries, the overall assessment still is that but little progress has been made by women.

One of the most pertinent studies of the status of women in developing countries was conducted by Smock (23). While her research was based on only five nations (Mexico, Ghana, Kenya, Pakistan, and the Philippines), the intensity of her research justified the generalizations which she developed. Smock concluded that a considerable amount of research has been completed on the topic, but that inaccuracies exist in some of the studies, especially as represented by rural populations. She found considerable sex differences in opportunities for schooling, with males having distinct advantages in four of the five nations (23: 252-54). She also found sex biases in the curricula, standards, and program options offered in all five of the countries (23: 254). Smock found that, "Educational systems initially cast in a male mold as instruments of

male mobility into wage jobs in the modern sector of the economy have tended to retain this bias." (23: 255) Of particular concern in Smock's research was the discovery that there is a general absence of educated and professionally-oriented female role models within the typical family, thus affecting adversely female academic performance and educational aspirations (23: 258).

A major problem for women living in rural areas of developing countries is that women work on the farms and at home without being counted as a part of the working labor force. Fong, in reviewing statistical studies pertaining to work production, concluded that as a result of the exclusion of rural women from the statistics, women are also excluded from national development plans (8).

A related problem in respect to the status of women was identified by Flora as having a negative impact on the educational development of women. She concluded that the structural and historical processes which erode the power of women and shift the balance of power to men's favor, as well as shifting power to fewer and fewer men, are related to integration in a world economic system that demands a mobile labor force and the alienation of land, which land is then used a a commodity rather than as a resource (7).

Case studies by Kahn of rural women in Punjab gave support to the findings of both Fong and Flora. Kahn, upon interviewing sixty-three married women of the Muslim village of Jhok Sayal, discovered that the women favored the education of males over females, wished to have their daughters marry at a young age, feared birth control, and disapproved of women earning money through skilled labor (11).

Bowman and Anderson studied the level of participation and literacy rates of females in developing countries. They concluded that girls participate in primary schools less than boys, that literacy is higher among males than among females, and that sex disparities are more pronounced at higher levels of the social system. They also found that there is relative sex equality in education over much of Latin America, but uneven Muslim resistance to the education of girls (2).

For the purposes of reviewing the needs of women in developing countries for adult education, it would seem necessary to identify the reasons why females do not enter school at the same ratio as males, why they are not provided equal instructional opportunities, and why they do not enter the job marked equally. After studying these problems, Tinker and Bramsen concluded that there are three types of obstacles to women's education: the cultural attitudes which interfere with women's full participation in educational institutions, the lack of relevance of girls' education to the local or national economy, and the teaching methods utilized within schools (24). While educators have only partial control over the first two of these factors, it would seem that they might be able to effect fundamental changes in the methods used in teaching females.

Another concern of adult educators is whether or not there are sex differences in the labor market outcomes of education. Ram studied this problem by using the human capital approach, which assumes different areas of comparative advantage for the two sexes and relates male-female differences in relation to the human capital accumulation by each sex. Ram concluded that, even in developing countries, the female market participation rate has a tendency to increase with education (20). The implications seem clear for adult educators: if we are to make progress in raising the labor market outcomes for women in developing countries, we must increase the educational level, especially in respect to education above the primary grades.

Another related issue concerning women of developing countries is the influence of women's schooling on maternal behavior. LeVine, in reviewing several representative demographic studies, concluded that women who extend their schooling have a reduced number of offspring and an increase in life span. The children of such women, in turn, grow up in distinctive environments, with fewer sibling and access to a greater share of family resources (15: S102-03).

LeVine also concluded that

> . . . most of the evidence shows the education of women to be deeply implicated in social change relation to the family and

> early education and indicates that it will continue to be a factor of central importance, however the pathways of causal influence run from institutional innovation to individual performance. (15: S103)

Another factor in the status of women in the Third World which should affect the type and extensiveness of the adult education programs is that such women, especially those of rural areas, have little free time. McSweeney and Freedman discovered such a lack of free time in conducting a decade-long study of women in Upper Volta. Those researchers concluded that the introduction of labor-saving technologies is a pre-condition for a broader educational program (17: S137). McSweeney and Freedman found that women in the project villages (experimental group) participated in the educational activities in significantly greater numbers than did the women in the central villages (17: S138). Evidence from the McSweeney and Freedman research indicated that policy makers and program planners should present educational experiences in a "package." For example, adult educators might well integrate literacy classes with instruction in health, income-related activities, and life improvement.

Adult educators should recognize that the typical textbooks tend to be male-dominated. Such a conclusion was reached by Kalia in a study of Indian textbooks. She made a content analysis of textbooks, written both in Hindi and English, for high school, higher secondary school, and pre-university students. She concluded that textbooks were decidedly patriarchal and male-dominated. Further, Kalia found that the textbooks fortified a sex-based division of labor in which men go to the world of work and women remain in the background providing service and support (12: S223).

Wang studied sex and ethnic differences in education beyond high school in Malaysia. She started with the assumption, which has been verified by many research studies, that women earn less than men with comparable social origins, educational attainments, occupational status, and other economically-related characteristics. Wang proceeded to review the effects of post-secondary education, so as to discover what mechanisms explain women's lower educational attainment. Using a model based on the economic theory of private decision-making, she compared a sampling of

male Malay and Chinese students with a comparable sampling of females. She concluded that, regardless of background factors, groups lacking incentives to continue schooling will fail to obtain the necessary achievement criteria for their own advancement (26: S159).

In a related study, Wainerman considered the effects of education on the female labor force in Argentina and Paraguay. She reviewed census data in an attempt to identify which females have a greater propensity to participate in the labor market. Following that, Wainerman tried to evaluate how formal education and family situation influence that propensity. She discovered that formal education exerts a strong influence on labor force participation of women, over and beyond that of family situations (25). Wainerman concluded that

> The implications of this study for both educational policy and human resource development are clear: education of females has a definite relation to their entry into the work force, and educating women, in this sense, will in the long run contribute to the development of national economics. (25: S194)

Finn, Reis, and Dulberg, citing the one-sidedness of educational attainment in favor of men over women, focused on differences in teaching methods as obstacles in women's education (6). Those researchers concluded that, "The possibility of equal results or equal life chances exists only when individuals can make their own 'positive choices' from available alternatives, rather than 'negative choices' from limited opportunity." (6: 126) A particular concern of Finn, Reis, and Dulberg was that there is a serious lack of female role models, after whom young women can heighten their aspirations. Paramount among the attitudinal dimensions of women's education, they held, were the attitudes toward occupational roles and the job market, which attitudes are directly related to the educational attitudes and aspirations of women (6).

Yates reviewed colonial education in Belgian Africa to gain a better understanding of the heritage of attitudes toward women in that nation (27). She drew the following conclusions as to how the consequences of colonial education affected the lives of Zairian women:

> Thus, the consequences of colonial education affected the lives of Zairian women in at least three ways. First, Belgian colonial practices reinforced gender as a legitimate basis for differential treatment. Sex-segregated schooling and the related sex-segregated structure of jobs made it manifest to both children and adults that there was something profoundly different in what males and females could and should learn and in what work they could and should perform. Second, colonial education superimposed upon diverse traditional African views Western concepts of appropriate roles for men and women. The sex-segregated school system was relied on to ensure that women would be in the home and not in the fields, the office, the pulpit, or the workplace. Finally, Belgian colonial policies and practices in education affected women through omission. The transplantation of Christian patriarchy fostered economic marginality among women of the Congo. Women's opportunities to learn modern skills, such as literacy (especially in French), or marketable trades, were scanty. At the same time their traditional role in agriculture was ignored and undermined by lack of training in improved agricultural methods. (27: 150-51)

Biraimah, concerned as to the impact of Western education on the role expectations of women in the Third World, conducted an in-depth study of a government secondary school located in Lome, the capital of Togo (1). She attempted to determine, ". . . whether students internalize teachers' attitudes, classroom interaction messages, and the messages implicit in the school's authority structure." (1: 189) In respect to the school environment, Biraimah concluded that, ". . . while the school officially had a reasonably equal male/female staff ratio, the actual exposure of students to males and females in roles of responsibility greatly underscored the dominant male position." (1: 191). The data obtained by Biraimah concerning teacher/student interactions caused her to conclude that

> . . . few messages or teacher expectations are being communicated to the girls, and, with the possible exception of classroom maintenance tasks, neither girls nor boys experienced any significant degree of interaction with their teachers. (1: 196)

Biraimah's findings pertaining to student career expectations were that the length of exposure to Western education does not affect such expectations. She concluded that

> While the secondary population appears to have been more diverse than the elementary sample, neither patterned itself more closely than the other to teacher-held expectations, thus calling into question the ability of the Western school to alter role expectations. (1: 198)

Upon reviewing many research efforts pertaining to the education of women in the Third World, Elliott and Kelly identified two important factors that have been widely discussed but not submitted to systematic examination (5). These factors were the ". . . time constraints on women's capacity to pursue schooling and the perceived economic rewards that influence family desires to invest in the education of daughters." (5: 334)

Elliott and Kelly concluded that the exploratory studies pertaining to the process of education raise more questions than they answer; the authors held that conducting research on the process and impact of different types of educational experiences is only beginning (5: 337).

Researchers on the education of women in developing nations owe much to Kelly and Kelly, who recently developed a bibliography on this subject. Those researchers concluded that most studies have been general descriptions of the status of women's education, with a few studies on the factors affecting access to schooling. They stressed that much more research is needed in respect to the processes of education and educational outcomes, especially in respect to male versus female achievement patterns (13: 347).

Some Suggested Guidelines for the Education of Women in Developing Nations

The studies just reviewed concerning the educational status of women in developing nations present a challenge for adult educators. It seems apparent that there is a need for changes in procedures, materials, and methods of delivery if education is to meet the needs of such women. The following guidelines should assist adult educators in meeting this challenge.

1. Particular attention should be given to the improvement of educational opportunities for women in rural areas and in areas of extreme poverty. As indicated above in the reports by Smock (23), Fong (8), and Flora (7), the women of the rural and poverty areas have the greatest need for education, yet have access to the poorest educational facilities and resources. Palmer, in reviewing the educational needs of rural women, suggested that a "basic-needs approach" be utilized in development. Such a concept, according to Palmer, is based upon the theory that if economic growth is to be significant there must be an improvement in the standard of living of the most disadvantaged group in the community (19). Certainly adult educators must make a concerted effort to upgrade the education of women in rural areas and in areas of extreme poverty if the status of such women is to be improved.

2. Successful women educators must be placed in key administrative and teaching positions so as to raise the aspiration levels of women students. As previously mentioned in the present paper, Finn, Reis, and Dulberg concluded that the lack of female role models is a serious deterent to young women of developing countries (6). Unless women can observe women leaders in both education

and the job market, their levels of aspiration will be affected adversely.

3. Women must be included in national development planning and in the implementation of adult education programs. Lindsay and her colleagues examined the historical and social reasons for the traditional roles of African women in agriculture, commerce, and other wage employment. Citing some adverse effects of technological development on the position of women, those investigators concluded that the only solution to the existing problems was to integrate women into the modern economy through education (16: 53-58). Joyner and Joyner corroborated such a conclusion, stressing that without involvement of women in planning and in the implementation of adult education programs the communities will be deprived of maximum intellectual benefits (10: 157-60).

4. The objectives of adult education programs must be directed toward cultural change, especially in respect to the status of women in society. Saber reviewed contemporary cultural and educational changes in the Arab States, especially in respect to the effort to liberate the Arab countries from literacy. He identified as a major goal correcting the cultural lag in understanding the role of women (22: 1-63). Newland identified childbearing attitudes as being a basic cultural problem in developing countries. She urged population program administrators to realize that while status, income, security, and emotional satisfaction may be reasons for women to have families, education and work opportunities can satisfy those needs as well (18: 1-33).

5. Curricula, textbooks, and materials of instruction used in the adult education programs must be free of sex bias. As indicated above, Smock found sex biases in the curricula, standards, and program options offered in

all five of the countries she studied (23: 252-54). Kalia, as reported above, concluded that textbooks were not only patriarchal and male-dominated, but also fortifing a sex-based division of labor in the market place (12: S223).

6. Adult education programs must be offered at times and at places where those programs are readily available to women. Several studies cited in the present paper have indicated that, because of family responsibilities, women have but limited free time and they are held close to the family home. If educational programs are to be of service to women, such limitations will need to be given careful consideration. Field-based instruction, offered in units adaptable to part-time students, will be necessary if the needs of women are to be accommodated.

7. Instructional media, easily adaptable to rural and poverty areas, can enhance the adult education programs. Colle proposed the use of audio cassette tapes for communication with outreach workers and rural women in Third World countries (3: 153-57). The same researcher, working with Fernandez de Colle, studied the use of paraprofessionals and audio cassette technology in several developing nations in order to reach and communicate with rural women and their families about such subjects as health, nutrition, family planning, and agriculture. The program formats of these two researchers included serial dramas, stories, music, talks, interviews, and short announcements, all with the intent of encouraging listening, learning, and action. Some of the key elements of the program strategy included dramatization, authority, reinforcement, localization, entertainment, questions; brevity, semi-sequential flow, and repetition (4: 1-67). Such simple media systems should be affordable and effective in meeting the educational needs of women in developing nations.

8. <u>There is a great need for action research, with a widely-based participatory rationale, concerning adult education methods, procedures, and programs</u>. An encouraging development of this type was reported at a recent international seminar held at the Nordic Folk Academy at Kungalv, Sweden. Among the papers presented were case studies of adult education in Kenya, Honduras, Haiti, India, Nigeria, and Tanzania (9). Such field-based research must be extended, and the findings must be given careful consideration by adult education leaders.

Summary

This paper has stressed the challenge which confronts adult educators if they are to aid in the improvement of the status of women in the Third World. Women in developing countries, especially those in rural and poverty areas, suffer from "second class" educational and work opportunities. It is to be hoped that such discrimination might be reduced through providing female role models; involving women in planning and development; dealing with cultural biases; improving materials of instruction; making adult education available at times when, and at places where, women can enroll; using practical media; and continuing participatory research.

Perhaps the most appropriate summary of the present study is one which was presented by Smock after she had completed an extensive study of the education of women in five developing countries. She said

> With the benefit of hindsight it is clear that education is not a kind of modern day magic wand that can eliminate all gender-related inequalities and overcome deeply rooted structural inequities in the manner in which societies allocate resources and rewards. Men's advantages accrue from many sources other than the earlier and greater avail-

ability of education. Therefore increasing women's opportunities for schooling can at best redress only part of the imbalance. Moreover while it is clear that inequalities in educational opportunity historcially have contributed to sex-related inequities in the family and in society, it does not necessarily follow that greater access to education would enable contemporary women to overcome their handicaps. The social and economic value of education and the relationships between educational attainment and educational outcomes change over time. The benefits obtaining to the select few who were schooled during a period of great educational scarcity do not accrue to the many who follow in their footsteps at a time when the balance between supply and demand for school leavers has shifted radically. (23: 279)

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